

CELEBRATIONS THROUGH DANCE

Arts Networking Conference – ARTS.COM

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Springboard text: *I'm In Charge of Celebrations*, by Byrd Baylor, Peter Parnall

Using celebrations as a theme, create your own graphic organizer. Use celebrations to stretch across the curriculum.

Justification: Celebrations as a theme that is broad and pervasive. It allows one to look at himself or herself as an individual and to look at various kinds of communities in the world that celebrate or can be celebrated. (e.g. celebrate animals, celebrate rain forests and other environments, celebrate periods in history, art forms and influences in the arts, etc.)

Guiding Questions:

What does it mean to celebrate?

What is a celebration?

What kinds of things can we celebrate?

In what ways can we celebrate?

Why is it important to celebrate and to value the celebrations of others?

I'm In Charge of Celebrations:

Sometimes people ask me, "Aren't you lonely out there with just desert around you?" I guess they mean the beargrass and the yuccas and the cactus and the rocks. I guess they mean the deep ravines and the hawk nest I the cliffs and the coyote trails that wind across the hills. "Lonely?" I can't help laughing when they ask me that. I always look at them...surprised. And I say, "How could I be lonely? I'm the one in charge of the celebrations."

Sometimes they don't believe me, but it's true. I am. I put myself in charge. I choose my own. Last year I gave myself one hundred and eight celebrations—besides the ones that they close school for. I cannot get by with only a few. Friend, I'll tell you how it works. I keep a notebook and I write the date and then I write about the celebration. I'm very choosy over what goes in that book. It has to be something I plan to remember the rest of my life. You can tell what's worth a celebration because your heart will pound and you'll feel like you're standing on top of a mountain and you'll catch your breath like you were breathing some new kind of air. Otherwise, I count it just an average day. (I told you I was choosy.)

Write your own three celebrations. Think of three contrasting ideas in terms of their space, time and energy elements. Mary Ann's were:

1. *The first snow fall, quiet snow, frozen, percussive shapes*
2. *My tulips blooming in the early spring/brilliant bright shapes, struggling against the soil, gently opening and closing.*
3. *Celebrating life on the beach at Thanksgiving, running, swimming in the waves, floating, absorbing light and energy, quietly meditating*

I. Warm up: **MOVING:** Use the body as a tool and build movement vocabulary. Breathe to warm up, center and connect mind and body.

A. Integrate mind and body with the brain dance. Thank you Anne Green Gilbert!

Breathe.

Curl head to tail: integrate mind and body.

Move upper half of the body.

Move lower half of the body.

Move right side.

Move left side.

Cross sides—the book.

Move diagonals.

Spin.

Swing.

Breathe.

B. Create individual shapes.

Create a shape for your name. Learn the shapes of others in your circle and perform them as a ritual using whole notes, half notes, quarter notes, eighth notes.

Friend, I wish you'd been here for Dust Devil Day. But since you weren't, I'll tell you how it got to be my first real celebration. You can call them whirlwinds if you want to. Me, I think dust devils has a better sound. Well, anyway, I always stop to watch them. Here, everyone does. You know how they come from far away, moving up from the flats, swirling and swaying and falling and turning, picking up sticks and sand and feathers and dry tumbleweeds. Well, last March eleventh we were all going somewhere. I was in the back of a pickup truck when the dust devils started to gather. You could see they were giants. You'd swear they were calling their friends to come too. And they came—dancing in time to their own windy music. We all started looking for more. They stopped that truck and we turned around and around watching them all. There were seven.

Once I saw a triple rainbow that ended in a canyon where I'd been before.

C. Locomotor: walk, run, leap, skip, slide, gallop, jump, and hop to travel through **space**. Create a running, **darting(energy)** dance that travels forward, circles, then floats and soars in an arc and creates a rainbow. (**space**)

II. **INVESTIGATING:** Explore the elements of dance: space, time and energy

III. **CREATING:** Improvise, create, perform dances and perceive and reflect on what students have danced and have viewed. Combine the above structures to create a dance. The celebration shape, the moving through space dust devil and rainbow, the time or rhythm of words sequence, and the energy phrase to create the BCDEF sections of a rondo. The A section will always be created from one's own celebrations.

Dance Structure *The Celebration Rondo*

- A. Travel to the inside space and take your place in the ritual circle using the breath to initiate the action. Use one of your own celebrations images to travel: Mary Ann's image: *Quietly snow falling*.
- B. Dance the individual celebrations shapes in who notes in the ritual circle. **Shape/space, time/metric**
- A. Travel to a partner using your own celebration image. **Space, time, energy** Mary Ann's image is *frozen shapes*.
- C. Dance the dust devil and rainbow dance in partners **energy, space/pathway in space**.
- A. Travel to your rhythm-of-words group using a new celebration image **space, time, energy**. Mary Ann's image is *tulips pushing*.
- D. Dance the rhythm of words based on a celebration song **time/metric and breath**.
- A. Travel to your energy space using another celebration image. Mary Ann's image is *emperor tulips blooming*. **Space, time energy**
- E. Dance your energy sequence based on your new year's celebration. Mary Ann's is *dancing a dance of thanksgiving on the beach* - **energy**.
- A. Travel to the ritual circles using a new celebration image. Mary Ann's is *dancing the painted lady tulips*.
- F. Dance the ritual circle dance.

IV. **CONTEXTUALIZE:** Understand and demonstrate dance in relation to its historical and cultural origins and create interdisciplinary connections between dance and other curricula. Talk about why people celebrate and explore various celebration rituals. View these celebration dances on videos. PBS has a beautiful series of videos on world dance. Examples are the Yoruba Tribe in Africa and a funeral celebration in Bali. Learn a celebration dance from one of the many ethnic groups in our community. The Utah Arts Council Folk Arts division and Jean Irwin, director of the Arts in education Program are wonderful resources.

Throughout the lesson, we have connected each of the ideas to various areas of the curriculum.

CD list:

1. *Planet Drum*, Mickey Hart
2. *One World*, Johnny Clegg and Juluka
3. *Angel's Kiss*
4. *Simple Gifts*, William Coulter and Barry Phillips
5. *Solas*
6. *Bailes Regionales*, music from Mexico
7. *Dancing with the Gods*, Dance of the Kwenyii by the Wapa Tribe
8. Wynton Marsalis, *Rondeau*, Mouet
9. Wynton Marsalis, *Sinfonia in D Major, G. 4* Torelli
10. Mannheim Steamroller, *Saving the Wildlife*, Rhinos and Elephants.
11. Mannheim Steamroller, *Saving the Wildlife*, Monkeys
12. Mannheim Steamroller, *Saving the Wildlife*, Eagles
13. Amistad, motion picture sound track
14. Vivaldi, *Four Seasons*, Spring